

Mailings take different tone as election nears - - Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) - November 1, 2003

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Both candidates in Bloomington's District 1 city council race decided months ago to run a positive campaign.

Not everyone seems to share that view.

In a recent mailing, Democrat Chris Sturbaum was accused of profiting from decisions he's made on the city's historic preservation commission. Sturbaum repairs older homes and buildings with his company, Golden Hands Construction.

On Thursday, Sturbaum and GOP District 1 candidate Dax Norton each found a copy in his mailbox. Both say they were surprised by it.

With the days closing in on the city election, last-minute mailings are going out. Most mailings from the candidates have focused on the issues, but some party mailings are looking to strike another chord with voters.

The Monroe County Republican Central Committee paid for the Sturbaum mailing. Suzanne Long of the county GOP had no comment on the mailings. She said Jeffrey Springer, an out-of-state consultant for the party, would be the only one to address them.

Springer is not in Bloomington, and efforts to reach him by e-mail produced no response.

According to the latest finance report, from the start of 2003 through Oct. 10, Springer was paid \$17,000 for his consulting services.

When the Sturbaum mailing went out Thursday, Sturbaum called Norton to ask about it.

"I didn't know it was coming," Norton said.

Norton said he has been busy sending out his own mailings with a positive message.

Asked what he thought about the mailing, he said: "It's not my kind of delivery." He has not talked to anyone with the GOP central committee about the mailings because he's been working all day, Norton said Friday.

Sturbaum said the mailing reflects mean-spiritedness and is simply not true. There is no link between his business and the decisions he makes on the historic commission, he said.

During his seven years on the commission, he said he's twice abstained from discussing and voting

on a project because of a professional conflict.

Part of the commission's statutory requirement is to have people with professional experience sit on it, said Nancy Hiestand, city staffer for the commission.

Architect Doug Bruce, an at-large GOP council candidate, sits on the same commission.

Meanwhile, Norton and Sturbaum say they'll continue to run positive campaigns.

Another mailing this week targeted at-large incumbent and Democrat candidate Andy Ruff, who is expected to sponsor a living-wage ordinance in the next few months.

The mailing features the feet of a corpse with a tag labeling it the "Bloomington Economy." To the left, it reads: "For a real fright this Halloween ... **Night of the Living Wage**. Death for Bloomington's Economy."

Ruff said he was extremely disappointed in the Republican Party for the mailings.

"The intent is to benefit the opponents by targeting me with dramatic, gross misrepresentation of the draft proposal," Ruff said.

The Monroe County Democratic Party has sent out its own Halloween-themed mailing to a targeted audience. It reads: "IU students are being offered treats by the local Republicans, but they're being tricked at your expense."

The mailing says Republicans are working to weaken or repeal neighborhood initiatives, such as the Quiet Nights Initiative. It also says the GOP has registered more than 1,500 students, including some who applied to vote absentee because they'll be working 12 hours on Election Day.

The mailing encourages people to vote and not take a Democratic majority on the city council for granted.

The 2,000 copies cost about \$400, said Dan Combs, county chairman of the Democratic Party.

"That is not a personal attack piece, that is party to party," Combs said. "The others are directed at individuals."

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